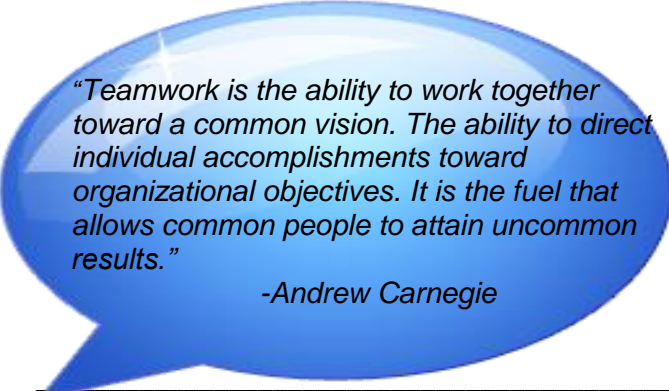


# **DPI VISTA Monthly**

**October 2009**



*"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."*

*-Andrew Carnegie*

**Jane Grinde**

Project Director

**Betsy Prueter**

Project Coordinator

**Ruth Anne Landsverk**

Family Education Coordinator

**Penny Bruskin**

VISTA Leader

**Casey Gauthier**

VISTA Leader, Editor

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## **Service Check-In**

*By Betsy Prueter*

By the beginning of October, many of our VISTAs will have passed the one month mark of their service. For others, it marked the passing of the half way point (or more)! Now that the year has started and you've had the opportunity to get to know your supervisors, site, and community, I encourage you to take a moment to step back. It's important to make sure you feel confident about your role and aware of your resources.

### **Are you and your Supervisor meeting regularly?**

We emphasized repeatedly how important the VISTA-Supervisor relationship is at Orientation, and for good reason! VISTAs and Supervisors are a team and, while you play different positions, you are both vital to the success of your work. You might want to use the bi-weekly reports as a communication tool and an opportunity to sit down to review them and check in with each other. You also might want to

schedule weekly meetings several months out just to be sure that when things get busy, you have allotted time together.

### **Have you discussed modifications to the VAD?**

Remember, the VAD is a living, breathing document that can (and should) be modified. We ask that you and your Supervisor sit down together and think carefully about this year. What adjustments should you make? What changes are necessary? What should you add? What doesn't fit? The VAD should work for YOU and YOUR site and each VISTA's VAD will look differently- that's ok! We ask that updated VADs be submitted by October 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Are you mapping site and community assets?**

One of the most meaningful ways for VISTAs to find success is to build networks and relationships. Mapping assets and community resources allows you to partner with those "unusual suspects" and strengthen

ties between the community and your site. Like the VAD, asset maps are living documents and should be ongoing throughout the year. We anticipate that you will add to and develop these maps as your own networks expand. We are asking for copies of these maps by October 15<sup>th</sup>, in order to get a sense for the connections you've made, but by no means do we expect a completely finished product by that time! Asset maps are crucial to sites sustainability and we hope you find them useful throughout the year.

### **Have you joined committees and teams at your site?**

Buy-in from site staff is something that we have asked Supervisors to help ensure. By now you should have met others working at your site and had the opportunity to introduce yourself and your work at staff meetings, in-services, etc. In the VAD you will notice that we ask you to join at least two teams or committees at your site whose work is related to partnerships. These teams can be on site or in the community but should make sense for you and your work. We will be contacting VISTAs at the beginning of October to find out what organizations you have joined. This is a chance to build partnerships and promote the good work you all are doing!

### **Have you networked with other VISTAs?**

Other VISTAs are your biggest resource. You are working on different projects at different sites in different cities and towns across Wisconsin, but you share common goals. Your successes and lessons learned could benefit another site.

Our monthly web or teleconference meetings will help you to network with each other, but I encourage you to explore other outlets. Use the VISTA list serv (email: [vistalist@lists.dpi.wi.gov](mailto:vistalist@lists.dpi.wi.gov)), check out the VISTA Google Site (<http://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/>) or pull out your contact list and email or call another VISTA or Supervisor. Forming partnerships with each other can only strengthen the work we do in our own communities.

Keep up the good work and remember that your site supervisor and the DPI VISTA project staff are here for support and guidance!

### **Save the Dates!**



October 15: Quarterly Reports due

October 15: Asset Maps due

October 19: Grant Writing Webinar

October 29:  
AmeriCorps Opening Ceremony, Green Lake

October 30: Updated VADs due to DPI

## Heather answers Sara's questions

*Heather is serving at the Shiocton Public Library.*



**Sara:** What is your favorite childhood memory?

**Heather:** Growing up with my brother and sister. They are the greatest people I have ever known.

**Sara:** Where did you graduate high school?

**Heather:** Shiocton High School; class of 1997!

**Sara:** If you could have dinner with any three people, who would it be?

**Heather:** My dad, who passed away in 1986, and my brother and sister, so they could dinner with my dad too.

**Sara:** If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?

**Heather:** I would stay where I am, by my family.

**Sara:** What is your favorite movie?

**Heather:** *Dumb and Dumber*; I laugh every time!

**Sara:** Who is your favorite author?

**Heather:** Dr. Seuss; *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* is my favorite book!

**Sara:** It is August 22, 2010. What do you want to have people remember about your VISTA year?

**Heather:** I want to have made a difference for at least one person, whether big or small.

**Sara:** What is your most enjoyable de-stressing activity?

**Heather:** A bath!

**Sara:** What is your favorite NFL football team?

**Heather:** Packers, of course!

**Sara:** Would you prefer a tropical or cold weather vacation, and where would you go?

**Heather:** I would like to go to New Zealand and Alaska.

## Sara answers Heather's questions

*Sara is serving at the Lakeland Family Resource Center in Spooner.*



**Heather:** Who are you working for?

**Sara:** Lakeland Family Resource Center; this is the first time they have gotten a VISTA- very exciting!

**Heather:** What is under your bed right now?

**Sara:** My pink fluffy slippers and maybe some dust bunnies.

**Heather:** What in your life are you most proud of?

**Sara:** My marriage to Aaron.

**Heather:** What is something you are hoping to accomplish this year?

**Sara:** A great foundation for my site and more creative cooking.

**Heather:** What is the farthest place you have ever traveled?

**Sara:** The Philippines, was a foreign exchange student in 1986.

**Heather:** Who are the members in your family?

**Sara:** My dad, Jerry (semi-retired); my mom, Judy (mostly retired); my sister, Dr. Jen (a chiropractor).

**Heather:** What cities have you lived in?

**Sara:** Milwaukee, WI; Oak Park IL; Downers Grove IL; Sycamore, IL; Antigo, WI; Marinette, WI; Green Bay, WI; and Shell Lake, WI.

**Heather:** What is your biggest pet peeve?

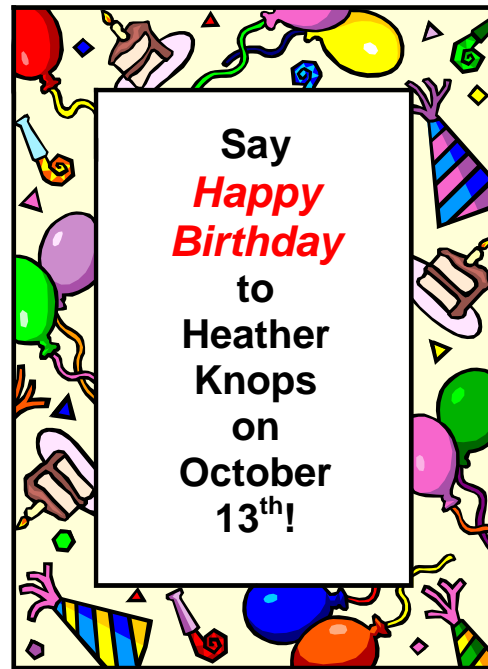
**Sara:** Non-communicative people.

**Heather:** Who do you look up to the most in your life?

**Sara:** My sister. Jen is an amazing sister, mother, and friend.

**Heather:** What do you want for Christmas?

**Sara:** Time with my family, uninterrupted and full of fun, and of course food.



## Recipe of the Month: Apple-Cranberry Crisp

*This month, Sara Hubin shares with us a warm and deliciously fruity recipe straight from her own kitchen!*

4 cups apples (cored, peeled and chopped)  
1 cup dried cranberries  
1 cup brown sugar  
1 1/3 cup flour  
1 cup white sugar  
1 1/2 tsp cinnamon  
1 egg, beaten  
4 Tbsp. melted butter



In a 9" x 13" pan, place apples and cranberries with brown sugar. In a large bowl, mix the dry and wet ingredients and spread evenly over the fruit and brown sugar. Bake for at 375 degrees 35-40 minutes until bubbly and brown on top. Enjoy!

## **“Hey! That’s a Good Idea!” Corner**

**Stephanie Dorman**, VISTA in the West Allis-West Milwaukee School District, distributed surveys to recruit parent volunteers and find parents who were interested in joining the Action Team. A survey is a great way to find parents who are interested in helping out and having their voices heard and appreciated.

**DECISION MAKING**



**Kristine Nadolski**, VISTA at the Wausau School District, wrote an article for school newsletters to introduce herself and described

the goals of her service year. She also included a picture so that she can be recognized around the district. **COMMUNICATING**

**Sylvia Sedrak**, VISTA with the Wausau Early Childhood Program, has already contacted local businesses and organizations regarding fundraising and doing presentations, which will hopefully lead to some long-term partnerships.

**COLLABORATING**

**Sara Byrnes**, VISTA with Fond du Lac Public Library, is thinking of ways to partner with the Fond du Lac Job Center and Moraine Park Technical College. This existing partnership offers assistance to those at the job center who are interested in obtaining GEDs and HSEDs among other educational resources. **EDUCATION**

**Colleen Douglass**, VISTA with Vaughn Public Library, has met with a regional agency that provides housing resources – including information on homeless shelters, transitional housing, and FEMA details to individuals. Community mapping helps to build coalitions and work collaboratively towards a common goal. **HOME FORCLOSURES AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE**

**Lizzy Lowrey**, VISTA with Racine Public Library, is in the early stages of developing a volunteer-managed help desk for help with computers literacy. On top of providing basic services to the library, volunteers would be trained to help library patrons with resumes, online applications, searching for jobs, and applying for benefits.

**EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SKILLS TRAINING**

## **10 Ways to Get Families on Your Action Team**

*By Ruth Anne Landsverk*

Yes, you **can** find wonderful, giving parents and family members to serve on your school Action Team for Partnerships! They may, in fact, be just waiting for an invitation.

Following, are a few ideas for getting families on your team who are willing, not only to share their own experiences, but also to speak for the ideas and interests of other families. Don't forget that "family members" come in all forms; not only as parents, but also as grandparents, step-parents, aunts and uncles, legal guardians, and other significant, caring adults in the life of a child.



**1. Ask teachers for ideas.** As the primary point of school contact for most families, teachers will be well-informed about many students' parents. Approach teachers one-on-one in a quiet moment. Ask for names of family members they think might like to help out the school in a way that is different and, one could argue, more meaningful than volunteering for a field trip or providing a classroom snack.

Use your chats with teachers as an opportunity to keep them up-to-date on Action Team activities and goals, to answer their questions, and to get their ideas about how teachers and families together can improve children's learning.

**2. Look to your school's parent organization.** Parents at the PTA or PTO meeting are already involved and willing to invest time in their children's school life; there's no need to sell them on the idea. A PTA parent might be willing to act as a liaison between the parent group and Action Team – i.e., keeping the PTA informed about what the Action Team is doing and how the parent group can be involved. It's a good idea to let the president of the parent group know what you're trying to accomplish. S/he may have good suggestions for Action Team candidates, too.

**3. Specify the time commitment and the duties.** It's much easier for a busy Mom, Dad or guardian to agree to attend one meeting a month than to sign on to a lengthy, two-year commitment for a major school initiative. Many parents don't volunteer to serve on Action Teams or say, "no," because they're nervous about being able to live up

to what may sound like pretty rigorous demands. Be ready to give family representatives a one-page summary about what the Action Team does, how family representation enriches the work of the team, and what expected duties are.

**4. Be flexible.** Can't get working families to attend Action Team meetings during the school day? Consider holding shorter, more frequent meetings occasionally at night, in the morning just before school starts, or during the lunch hour. Offer Action Team members a stress-reducing school breakfast or lunch – one less thing for your family member to squeeze in during the day.



**5. Ask the Action Team to celebrate the school's diversity.** Connect the Action Team to families with diverse cultures by designating school events or activities that celebrate families' cultural traditions and history. Build on the team's connections with families to identify new Action Team members, fill families' needs for helping children learn, and link families to each other.

**6. Parents love company.** Aim for two to three parents or family representatives on your Action Team. A sole parent member may be reluctant to speak up, especially when everyone else on the team has worked together in the same profession for the past eight years

and attended each others' baptisms, bar mitzvahs, and birthday parties. Consider asking a veteran-member to mentor new members, or to walk them through questions about the group's mission, past accomplishments, and procedures for making things happen. Don't let family members feel lonely.

**7. Leave room on the agenda for issues important to families.** Make the report from families a priority on every meeting agenda and schedule it early in the meeting. There are few gestures of respect more powerful than being listened to. Parents are much more likely to make time to attend meetings if they have important information to share and know that their work and contributions will receive due consideration.

**8. Agree on a communications strategy.** Who will type up Action Team meeting notes and e-mail them to all members, including the ones who couldn't attend? How can absent members get their thoughts and comments about the meeting to other members in between meetings, instead of waiting until the next meeting? Make sure all members have each others' e-mail addresses and phone numbers and know who to contact if the unexpected arises.

**9. Keep everyone informed about Action Team efforts.** Summarize Action Team developments in the monthly family newsletter and among staff committees. Introduce Action Team members at school meetings and recognize them at end-of-year celebrations. Display a poster near the school entrance highlighting Action Team and

partnership goals and accomplishments. Maintaining the Action Team's visibility will make it easier to attract new members among school families who already know what the Action Team "is."

**10. Use issues of interest to gain members.** The family member who walks into the principal's office with a question or concern is a potential Action Team member. So is the parent who speaks up at a family forum and the one who fills out and returns a family survey. What are the issues that galvanize families and stir their enthusiasm for their own child's learning? How do those issues touch all children in the school? Parents and family members who feel that their interests have a venue in the school can make long-lasting contributions as Action Team members.

## **Sensational Steps to Save your Stipend**

*By Casey Gauthier*

**Turn off the television.** One big way to save money is to watch less television. There are a lot of financial benefits to this: less exposure to guilt-inducing ads, more time to focus on other things in life, and less electrical use. It's great to unwind in the evening, but seek another hobby to do that.

**Sign up for free customer rewards program!** Even if you rarely shop at that place, having a rewards card for that place will eventually net you some coupons and discounts. Create a Gmail address just for these mailings, collect every card

you can, and then check that account for extra coupons whenever you're ready to shop.

**Make your own gifts instead of buying stuff from the store.** You can make food mixes, candles, bread, cookies, soap, and all kinds of other things at home quite easily and inexpensively. These make spectacular gifts for others because they involve your homemade touch, plus quite often they're consumable, meaning they don't wind up filling someone's closet with junk.

**Write a list before you go shopping – and stick to it.** One should *never* go into a store without a strong idea of what one will be buying while in there. Make a careful plan of what you'll buy before you go, then stick strictly to that list when you go to the store. Don't put anything in the cart that's not on the list, no matter how tempting, and you'll come out of the store saving a bundle.

**Drink more water.** Not only does drinking plenty of water have great health benefits, water drinking has financial benefits, too. Drink a big glass of water before each meal, and not only will you digest it better, you won't eat as much, saving on the ol' food bill. You'll also find yourself feeling a bit better as you begin to get adequately hydrated (most Americans are perpetually dehydrated).



**Clean your car's air filter.** A clean air filter can improve your gas

mileage by up to 7%, saving you more than \$100 for every 10,000 miles you drive in an average vehicle. Plus, cleaning your air filter is easy to do in just a few minutes – just follow the instructions in your automobile's manual.

**Wash your hair with baking soda and lemon juice.** The No Shampoo method of natural hair care has a few distinct goals and benefits: it invites fewer chemicals (such as preservatives called parabens) into the body, drops less gunk in our water systems, and it's *cheap*. Replace shampoo with an easy-to-find cleaning agent such as a baking-soda-and-water mix, or a sea salt solution. Conditioner is replaced with some acidic, like apple cider vinegar, tea or lemon juice. Here is an extensive resource on these factors and more:  
[http://community.livejournal.com/no\\_poo/profile](http://community.livejournal.com/no_poo/profile)

*(courtesy of the WiCC September VISTA update)*

## **A Few Things We Know for Sure**

*By LeAnn Schmidmayr and Nicole Stachurski*

As a VISTA supervisor, I am looking forward to my second year of working in the program with our VISTA, Nicole Stachurski. Nicole and I have been working together at Grove Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids for nearly a year already and we'd like to share some ideas with those of you who are also starting out in a new working relationship with a VISTA.



**Introductions are important.** It is very important to make sure that a VISTA is introduced to all building staff. Nicole came to our first Grove Gathering and was introduced to all teaching staff, as well as to our assistants, custodians, and cooks. One never knows who will eventually become a contact person, so all stakeholders, even members of our parent group needed to meet Nicole. She also had to put forth the effort to get to know them.

**Duties need to be defined.** All staff and your new VISTA should be aware of the VISTA job description and any limitations. Teachers at our elementary school swarmed toward



Nicole, a new person in the building who had time to work on projects. Nicole was asked to do several things that were outside her realm, like listening to students read and work with them on an individual basis. While Nicole wanted to do this, it was not in her job description, so this needed to be clearly noted for all.

**Rapport needs to be developed.** This can take some time, especially if your VISTA is new to your staff and your location. Assure your staff and your VISTA that “we are all in this together”. It can take a while for a new-to-the-area VISTA to become acclimated and trusted. Nicole is also a parent of one of our students, but her family is fairly new to our district. Be a patient cheerleader for your projects and for the work your

VISTA will do. Trust needs to have time to grow. Water it well.

**Two-way communication is key.** This includes communication between you and your VISTA, as well as between your VISTA and your staff. The dynamics of your building need to be taken into consideration. VISTAs are energetic and want to get things done. This fact needs to be understood by the rest of the staff and your VISTA needs to consider that there are building protocols and traditions that need to be honored. It is important for a new VISTA to be a good listener as well as a good contributor, and to accept feedback in a professional way.

**A schedule needs to be established, even if it is a flexible one.** You will need to set up a schedule with your VISTA as soon as you can and it must be shared with others. Once Nicole and I had a flexible schedule determined, we shared this with staff so that they would understand that her schedule often might extend before or after the school day and that she might be away from the building for a time. Teaching staff are used to a regular schedule during the school day. A VISTA in a school needs to work when there is access to parents and community members. That is not always during the school day, so this should be known to all right up front.

**Goals need to be clear.** It is important for the goals that have been developed to be clear and accessible to all staff. You will more than likely be needing assistance from others to accomplish your goals, so keeping them informed is

crucial. This will also help to keep staff informed about the job of your VISTA. Be realistic! One thing can lead to another, and before you know it, there could be several projects started. A VISTA can seem like the answer to all of your wishes, but a VISTA is only one person and can only do so much.

**Let your VISTA contribute.** A VISTA comes with a whole different set of eyes. Let them shine! Think together of possible new ways to do things. Be open and flexible, but keep the end goals in sight. Nicole sometimes has ideas that I would never have thought to tackle, but with her leadership, things really have happened! Take this VISTA opportunity to look at old problems in a new way. Be open to suggestions and talk things over. Have fun!

**Show your appreciation for the new insights and thoughts a VISTA can bring.** Give encouragement, say thank you, open your door and invite conversation. Share some flex time or an opportunity for some extra professional development for your VISTA. Let your staff know what your VISTA has accomplished. Invite your VISTA to staff outings and staff meetings, when appropriate. Let the additional energy that a VISTA can bring spill over onto you and your staff. It can be uplifting!

**Enjoy your time together.** Find ways to make your projects fun! When it rains on your Wal-Mart brat sale and you only make \$200 for a full days work, make sure you are able to find something from the day to laugh about. A little humor goes a long way.

**Celebrate VISTA!** Share your success with others. Be thankful for your many opportunities. VISTA is a unique experience that can take many of your ideas from the planning stage to the implementation stage. It is a learning experience that both the VISTA and the supervisor can share. Count your benefits; there will be many!

## **Marco Polo – Not Just a Game for the Pool: How to Focus your Search for Grants**

*By Penny Bruskin*

As we are all settling into our various sites, many of us are interested in jumping into program development, idea-sharing, and collaboration ideas. But what happens when many of these ideas are dependent upon finding sources of funding outside of our sites? Where do we go to find these grants for our specific sites and projects?

First off, many grants are fairly localized, so it might be a good idea to talk to your supervisor in detail about local organizations to contact before looking elsewhere. In the same vein, if your organization is already getting large donations from local organizations/foundations, it is wise not to step on the toes of anyone at your organization or a partnering organization. Make sure to check first before attempting to secure a grant.

For those in the Madison area, a one-stop-shop resource to check out is UW Madison's Grants Information Collection:

<http://grants.library.wisc.edu/>. There are a number of other similar collections around the state. Go to the following address to find an open source for finding grants near you: <http://grants.library.wisc.edu/organizations/wisconsinresources.html>



These resources are open to the public and allow you to search for grants relating to just about any topic imaginable. Whether you are

searching for local Wisconsin resources, private foundation grants, or corporate opportunities, these collections will steer you in the right direction. Many of the password protected portals are available on site, so feel free to call ahead to see if a librarian can help you with your search.

### **For Recovery VISTAs**

This search for funding in a library setting may seem incredibly daunting. Lucky for us, Barb Huntington, DPI Public Library Development team member, has shared her wealth of knowledge through the following tips.

First, check out ALA's website. Barb Huntington regularly posts grant opportunities here. Typically, there are at least a few grant opportunities listed in sections 4 & 5.

<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/pld/ys-postings.html>

Next, it will take some serious researching, but our statewide Library Division has an online newsletter, *Channel Weekly*, which

is full of information. These will have all the resources you could ever ask for relating to libraries and literacy, including annual grant opportunities. You can find this as a link at the above DPI link.

### **Getting Started (for all VISTAs)**

Once you have found grants, thought up a proposal, and have gotten approval from your supervisor, you'll be just about ready to write the grant. But wait! Where do you start? No worries; we've got you covered. Check out our **Grant Writing Workshop at 10:00 AM on October 19<sup>th</sup>** via Wisline Web. Following that, you'll be more than set to rock the socks off of that grant!

## **Grant Opportunities**



### **National/State Schools of Character Awards**

The National/State Schools of Character Awards Program names public and private schools and districts (K-12) as National Schools of Character (NSOC) for their outstanding work in character education. The program honors recipients, showcases their work, and helps them to inspire and lead others.

Deadline: December 1, 2009  
<http://www.character.org/nsoc>

### **Captain Planet Foundation**

The Captain Planet Foundation funds hands-on environmental projects to encourage youth around the world to work individually and collectively to solve environmental problems in their neighborhoods and communities.

Deadline: December 31, 2009  
<http://www.captainplanetfdn.org/grants.html>

### **U.S. Dept. of Education: I am What I Learn Contest**

The Department of Education is asking students to respond to President Obama's challenge to take responsibility for their own learning by creating videos, up to two minutes in length, describing steps they will make to improve their education and the role of education in fulfilling their dreams. Submissions can be video blogs, public service announcements, music videos, or documentaries, and will be voted on by the public.

Deadline: October 8, 2009.  
<http://www.ed.gov/iamwhatilearn/index.html>

### **The Student Conservation Association: Green Your School Contest**

The Student Conservation Association's Green Your School Contest stimulates and/or identifies conservation service projects designed by high school students that improve, restore, beautify, or conserve their high school

environment.

Deadline: October 9, 2009.  
<http://www.thesca.org/green-your-school>

### **Lowe's Toolbox for Education**

Lowe's Toolbox for Education grant program funds school improvement projects initiated by parents in recognition of the importance of parent involvement in education.

Deadline: October 16, 2009.  
<http://toolboxforeducation.com/>

### **UnitedHealth Group/Youth Service America: Grants for 'Health Heroes'**

UnitedHealth Group and Youth Service America are offering children the opportunity to become "Health Heroes" by learning about childhood obesity, designing programs to address it, and implementing the programs in their communities.

Deadline: October 22, 2009.  
<http://ysa.org/MyYSA/YSAContent/YSAnews/tabid/219/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/175/UnitedHealthHEROESServiceLearningGrantsDeadlineOctober22.aspx>

### **CVS: Caremark Community Grants**

Awards funds to nonprofit organizations for programs targeting children with disabilities; programs focusing on health and rehabilitation services; and public schools promoting a greater level of inclusion in student activities and extracurricular programs, and initiatives that give greater access to physical movement and play.

Deadline: October 31, 2009.  
<http://info.cvscaremark.com/community/our-impact/community-grants>

**Project Learning Tree:  
GreenWorks! Grants**

Project Learning Tree (PLT) GreenWorks! grants engage PLT educators and their students with their community via "learning-by-doing" environmental projects that involve student leadership, service-learning, and community participation.

Deadline: October 31, 2009.  
[http://www.plt.org/cms/pages/21\\_22\\_21.html](http://www.plt.org/cms/pages/21_22_21.html)

**Prudential: Spirit of Community Awards**

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards honor young people in grades 5 through 12 who have demonstrated exemplary voluntary service to their communities.

Deadline: November 2, 2009.  
<http://spirit.prudential.com/view/page>

**Barnes and Noble Grants**

Barnes and Noble booksellers is considering requests for grants from nonprofit organizations that focus on art, literacy, or education (K-12). Applicants must have a plan for promoting the grants program with Barnes and Noble and must be willing to work with the local stores on in-store programming.

Deadline: rolling.  
[http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/our\\_company/sponsorship/Sponsorship\\_main.html](http://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/our_company/sponsorship/Sponsorship_main.html)